

2012 provided the spark: Tamim

SAKEB SUBHAN from Dubai

There is a special place for the Asia Cup in Bangladeshi hearts because growing up in the 1990s and 2000s, it was the tournament that served as the backdrop for the India-Pakistan rivalry, set the stage for the emergence of Sri Lanka and, more relevantly, provided a venue for Bangladesh to start rubbing shoulders with the big boys on a regular basis.

Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal, battling his way back from a finger injury to be fit in time for tomorrow's tournament opener against Sri Lanka in Dubai, pointed to another reason for the regional tournament's importance -- that epochal edition in Dhaka in 2012 when Bangladesh went from alsorans to almost-champions, losing by two runs against Pakistan in a final that ended in tears on the pitch and in the stands.

"Everyone may think about the 2012 Asia Cup final, but I see it a little differently," Tamim told reporters yesterday afternoon sitting in a restaurant of the team hotel. "People talk about the 2015 World Cup where Bangladesh reached the quarterfinal] as the tournament where a new Bangladesh emerged, but the 2012 Asia Cup was the tournament where we first got the belief that we could beat any team -- that we could be competitive.

"I remember that; not my four fifties or how we lost the final by two runs. I remember how we played as a team and beat teams that no one would have thought we could beat.



competitive matches against Pakistan. It was "We are focused on the first two matches, a special tournament for me."

Four years later, in the Twenty20 edition in Dhaka, they did a repeat, beating Sri Lanka and Pakistan in the group stages and losing to India in the final.

It is therefore no surprise that because of the importance of the Asia Cup in the participating nations, Bangladesh's status as last edition's runners-up and their good performances in recent times, expectations are sky high.

But like skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza before leaving Dhaka, Tamim refused to look beyond the first round, particularly

We beat India and Sri Lanka, and lost two very tomorrow's clash against Sri Lanka.

both of which we have to win. If we lose one and win one, there will still be a question mark," Tamim said. "The game on the [September 15th is especially important for us. Many things will fall into place if we start the tournament with a win -- what we are doing right and what we need to improve on."

The marquee rivalry may be India versus Pakistan but with the heightening of passions between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka players in the Nidahas Trophy in March -and also the fact that former Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha is now in

charge of Sri Lanka after a not uncontroversial jumping of ship -- there seems to be a new rivalry forming in Asia.

"When we see each other, like we met them yesterday, we have a friendly relationship. Every team should have one or two rivalries. I don't think either team has the Nidahas Trophy incident in mind. Regardless of the history, both sides know how important the September 15 game is."

Team manager Khaled Mahmud, a former captain who apart from winning a 1999 World Cup stunner against Pakistan waged a few futile battles against the big subcontinent teams in the 1990s and the early 2000s, served as a bridge between the generations of also-rans and almost-champions. He still calls India and Pakistan 'giants' and sets them ahead of Bangladesh, but also believes that there is enough in this Bangladesh team to do something special this time.

"The team we have now is experienced because of the five senior players, but it's important for us to have the young members contribute. We have a good chance if we can play as a team.

"Of course the Asia Cup is important -the team that wins gets to call themselves the best Asian team for two years."

By that logic, Bangladesh have been the second best Asian team for four of the last six years. It is now time to see if they can go a step further and the first step will fittingly be against a team with whom they have had heated battles in the recent past.



Costa Rica forward Daniel Colindres.

PHOTO: STAR

World Cupper signs for Bashundhara

SPORTS REPORTER

which kicks off on 22.



Promoted Bashundhara Kings flew in Costa Rica World Cup team's forward Daniel Colindres on Wednesday for the upcoming Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), scheduled to begin after the season's curtain raising event, the Federation Cup,

Bashundhara Kings, who qualified for the professional football league by becoming champions in the Bangladesh Championship League, have decided to form a strong team which will enable them to make a run for the BPL title.

"We are going to build a strong side with expectations for good results and that is why we are trying to ripen our team with quality foreign players," Bashundhara Kings president Md Imrul Hasan told the Daily Star, "We have already brought in two national footballers of Gambia, who have been in trial."

However, Daniel Colindres is not the first footballer to come to Bangladesh and play in the domestic league following a World Cup campaign. Iraqi defenders Shamir Shaker and Karim Mohmmad Allawi and Iranian Nasser Hejazi also played in the country's domestic circuits after participating in the 1986 and 1978 World Cups respectively.

Hasan informed that Colindres will sign a nine-month contract with the side, who will play him in the AFC Cup if Bashundhara Kings secure their ticket to the Asian Football Confederation's second-tier club competition. The Kings also roped in Spanish coach Oscar Bruzon.

As a part of their preparations for the new season, the Kings will play a friendly match against Maldives' champions New Radiant at Nilphamari on September 21, Hasan added.

squads for

AGENCIES, Harare

BD tour

Zim pick

Brendan Taylor, Craig Ervine and Sean Williams have been named in Zimbabwe's squads on Thursday for the tours of South Africa and Bangladesh.

Zimbabwe are scheduled to play three ODIs, starting from September 30, and as many Twenty20Is in South Africa before flying to Bangladesh for three ODIs and two Tests later in October.

The trio, alongside Graeme Cremer and Sikandar Raza, didn't participate in the home triseries in July this year and the five-match ODI series against Pakistan due the non-payment of salaries. The International Cricket Council then had to get involved and will work alongside Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) to financially bring them back on track. **SQUADS**

ODI: Hamilton Masakadza (capt), Solomon Mire, Craig Ervine, Brendan Taylor, Sean Williams, Peter Moor, Elton Chigumbura, Donald Tiripano, Kyle Jarvis, Brandon Mavuta, Richard Ngarava, John Nyumbu, Wellington Masakadza, Tarisai Musakanda, Tendai Chatara, Cephas Zhuwao. TEST: Hamilton Masakadza (capt), Brian Chari, Craig Ervine, Brendan Taylor, Sean Williams, Peter Moor, Regis Chakabva, Donald Tiripano, Kyle Jarvis, Brandon Mavuta, Richard Ngarava, John Nyumbu,

Collingwood calls time

Wellington Masakadza,

Ryan Burl, Tendai Chatara.

AFP, London

Former England allrounder Paul Collingwood announced on Thursday that he will end his professional career at the end of the season, 22 years after making his first-class debut.

A three-time Ashes winner and the only man to captain England to a global trophy after leading them to glory in the 2010 World Twenty20, Collingwood played 68 Tests, 197 oneday internationals and 36

T20 matches. The 42-year-old has been described by his county side Durham as their "greatest-ever run scorer and most illustrious player".

Heat expected to be a factor

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai



This year's Asia Cup is likely to have an extra factor other than the teams duking it out on the the teams duking it out on the pitches of the Dubai International Stadium and the Sheikh Zayed International Stadium.

Players returning from practice during the daytime bear a weary look because of the extreme heat. The mercury is expected to reach 43 degrees Celsius on the opening day of the tournament when Bangladesh take on Sri Lanka.

"I think the heat will be a major factor," said Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal at the team hotel yesterday. "It is likely to turn into a mental game. When you play in high temperatures, the batsman who has played 60-70 balls will feel tired and is prone to a mistake. If he can take a good decision in that weak moment -- in those five, ten seconds -- it will become his advantage. The battle will be within his mind.

"We have to be mentally strong to handle this



heat. Normally we don't play cricket in this weather; we do play in the heat in Bangladesh but this is something different. We hope to be a mentally stronger team."

With matches scheduled to start at 3:30pm local time, the heat will certainly come to bear on the team fielding first, which may make the toss a

more important factor than it already is. "It depends on the type of surface we are play-

ing on," Tamim said when asked about the toss. "If it is a good batting wicket, we would like to bat first. I can only say after I see the wicket."

Tamim has played here in the Pakistan Super League -- as have Mahmudullah Riyad, Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman -- but said that they were a little different as T20 is a shorter format and the tournaments are held at a kinder time of the year.

While the UAE has been host to ODI cricket since the mid-1980s, almost all the matches have taken place in the relatively cooler period between October and April, with some matches extending to May. However, there have been only four ODIs in more than 30 years here that have been held in the oppressive heat of August and September, when Australia played Afghanistan in a one-off match and Pakistan in a three-match series in 2012.

It seems like while the world relishes the next fortnight of cricket from the desert, the cricketers will have an altogether different experience.

New Year and Chandika's 50th

SPORTS REPORTER from Dubai

The teams currently preparing for the Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates have been put up in the Dubai InterContinental Hotel in a part of the city called Festival City, which seemed aptly named as it is the headquarters of the cricket carnival about to start from tomorrow when the Asia Cup gets underway with Bangladesh taking on Sri

The carnival atmosphere was dialed up a bit yesterday as it was a national holiday to mark the Islamic New Year. Cricketers of Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Bangladesh were seen milling about in the lobby.

It was a rest day for the Tigers but Shakib Al Hasan, Tamim Iqbal and Nazmul Hossain Shanto braved the heat -- as did the Pakistan team -- to have a batting session at the Dubai International Stadium and put their injured fingers to the test.

Of the three, Shakib's injury -- to his left

little finger -- is most concerning because he has been nursing it since January and had recently wondered publicly about how he could bat. Team manager Khaled Mahmud however said that he seemed to be coping well with the help of pain-killers, and expressed hope that they will be able to play with a full squad come Saturday.

A sub-plot of tomorrow's opener will be the burgeoning rivalry between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and one of the people that can be said to have played a part in it strode out to the lobby and greeted Bangladeshi reporters warmly. It was none other than current Sri Lanka coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who prematurely left his corresponding post in Bangladesh in November last year.

"They are doing very well. They have to

do well," the Sri Lankan beamed when **ASHISH VADRA** asked about Bangladesh. I felt really bad after hearing the Later, Tamim reminded the reporters that

it was Hathurusingha's 50th birthday and there may have been a glint of affection when he said it. It may well be a little different tomorrow.

Shastri in hot water

AFP, New Delhi

Lanka.



India coach Ravi Shastri has come under fire for his side's humiliating 4-1 Test series loss to England -- a

second consecutive away defeat for the world's top-ranked side.

The thrashing in England, following the loss in South Africa earlier this year, piles pressure on Shastri ahead of a tour to Australia in November and next year's World Cup -- as well as a massive clash with arch-rivals Pakistan next week.

Critics and former captains have rounded on the coach, particularly for his mid-series claim that his team is the best to come out of India in 15 years.

"Self-belief is a wonderful quality; but being caught in the bubble of your own publicity is self-defeating," said Sambit Bal, chief editor of cricket website Cricinfo, on

"India had their moments but the scorecards say 4-1 and India weren't as good as they should have been," said noted commentator Harsha Bhogle.

Sunil Gavaskar pointed out that Indian teams of the 1980s had won series in England and the West Indies -- as well as a series victory in England as recently as 2007.

"The best travelling teams are made by performances on the ground and not by sitting in the dressing room and talking about it," added former Test opener Virender Sehwag.

Star-tracker no more

ANISUR RAHMAN

He played for a number of clubs and then coached a number of mid-table teams when football was very popular in the country. He never played for the national team or coached one of the two big teams in the country - Abahani and Mohammedan. But Wazed Gazi will be remembered as one of the finest coaches Bangladesh has produced.

The soft-spoken tactician is no more. He died at his ancestral home in Jessore on Thursday morning, sending shockwaves through-

TRIBUTES

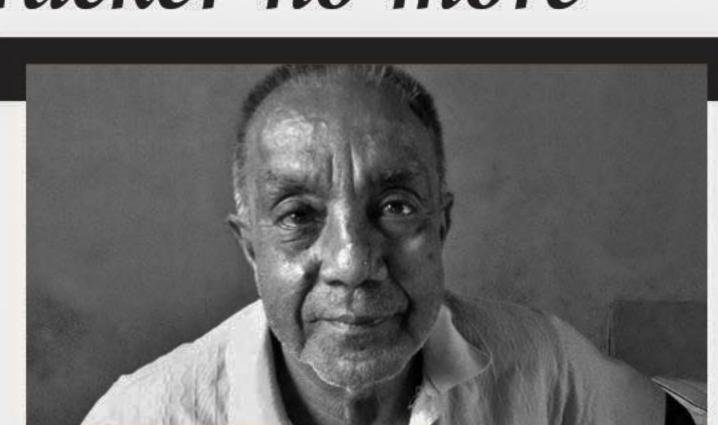
news. He was my coach at Rahmatganj but he was also my teammate when we played in Jessore. He was a skillful player and was very friendly. He had a deep dedication for the game. I'm badly missing him at the moment while reminiscing those good memories.

IMTIAZ SULTAN JONNY

He was a beautiful person and technically sound as a coach. Although he was not a qualified coach, no certificate, he was an intelligence coach who knew very well how to groom a player.

KAISER HAMID

He was a nice person who had sharp knowledge. He could easily find a player's weakness and work to rectify that. He was a very strict taskmaster. He was also honest and selected the playing eleven with performers in training.



WAZED GAZI (1938-2018)

out the country's football fraternity. He was 80 and left behind two sons and a daughter who should be very proud of their father's contri-

bution to the country's football. Why he was popular as coach? He produced future stars in a spectacular journey he embarked upon as Rahmatganj Muslim Friends Society coach in 1981. Along the way he coached Arambagh Krira Sangha, Muktijoddha Sangsad, Farashganj Sporting Club, Team BJMC, Sheikh Russel Krira Chakra and Brothers Union. He failed to

win a single league title as coach. But cynics say Wazed Gazi should have won at least one or two League titles with those young vibrant sets had his employers been not engaged in arranged affairs, an open-secret in Bangladesh's club players have been increasing in culture.

It was through his strong and regimented way of teaching so many players made their mark and went all the way to become household names in country's football. Kiaser Hamid, Imtiaz Sultan Johny, Aloke, Asish Bhadra, Ahmed, Rehan, Alfaz Ahmed and Zahid Hossain Emily to name a few.

He coached a few teams during the Professional Football League era, which was launched in 2008. But by that time he was not physi-

cally fit enough to comply with that demanding job. Besides, he was a bit frustrated with the decline of Bangladesh's football.

This reporter had an interview of Gazi in 2012 at the Wanderers Club in Motijheel. Unfortunately it was never published. He depicted football's past and present scenario in that conversation.

"It has always been a happy moment for me when I see the footballers whom I coached served the national team. I got everything in my playing and coaching career save the National Sports Award. Football is now walking backward as there is no football at the district level and the number of quality footballers has reduced. Due to a lack of quality players, foreign domestic league. It feels really bad when I see the empty stadium. Match-fixing is a cancer of our football," he told this reporter

A left-winger, who played both for Mohammedan and Abahani, Gazi hung up his boots 1977 after a stint with BJMC. But the best of Gazi unfolded when he started to teach from what he has learnt. He never obtained a coaching licence, but more than compensated for it with his knowledge and dedication.